

Microsoft ruling
straight
Business, 5B

Poughkeepsie Journal

MID-HUDSON

Our Towns 3
Obituaries 4
Business 5 **B**

(845) 437-4833 jdoll@poughkeepsiejournal.com

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 16, 2000

Groups to chart river's PCB damage

Restoration projects the goal

By Dan Shapley
Poughkeepsie Journal

MILLBROOK — No one knows the extent PCB contamination has hurt the Hudson River's resources, but a group of federal and state agencies aims to find out — and compensate the public for its losses.

"The trustees' goal is not money," said Thomas Brosnan, an ecologist for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, or NOAA. "Our goal is to have

the responsible party (perform) restoration projects."

The Hudson River Natural Resource Damage Assessment trustees — made up of the NOAA, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service — met Tuesday with the Lower Hudson Coalition of Conservation Districts, a group of 10 county soil and water districts from New York City to Albany.

The trustees plan to iden-

tify, measure and restore natural resources — and the resources they provide — damaged by polychlorinated biphenyls.

Their mission complements that of the Environmental Protection Agency, which is focused on cleaning up or containing the 200,000 or more pounds of PCBs released legally from two General Electric facilities in the upper Hudson River estuary until 1977.

PCBs are a health concern because they last in the environment for decades and accumulate in living

creatures, posing health hazards to mammals, fish, birds and other wildlife.

Possible hazards located

Trustees have identified possible ecological hazards to fish, birds, wildlife, sediments, groundwater, surface water quality and floodplains. They are also examining potential lost uses of the Hudson, like recreational fishing.

Health concerns prompted the state to ban recreational fishing in much of the river for almost 20 years, and fishing for certain species is still restricted. Commercial

fishing remains banned.

"One of the clear damages has been to recreational anglers," Brosnan said, noting that compensation can include not only restoring safe fish but any piece of the local ecology valued by anglers that has been definitively damaged by the pollutants.

"One of the biggest categories of potential restoration projects has been aesthetic-oriented," said Larry Gumaer, a member of the DEC's Natural Resource Damage Unit.

Possible restoration projects might include habitat improvements, reduction of pollutant loads, enhancing fish populations, developing nature trails and acquiring land for river access.

Ed Hossie, district manager of Dutchess County's Soil and Water Conservation District, said he plans to apply for compensation for several restoration projects in the county.

The trustees plan to release a Natural Resources Damage Assessment Plan this fall.